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US Government and Sri Lanka Create First Energy Efficient Lighting Center in South Asia

Colombo - February 26, 2009: Sri Lanka will host the first energy efficient lighting *Center of Excellence* in South Asia, thanks to funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The Regional Center for Energy Efficient Lighting (RCEEL) will serve as a research hub to develop new lighting technology to be used in Sri Lanka and South Asia. Rebecca Cohn, USAID Mission Director, and Dr. Krishan Deheragoda, Chairman of the Sustainable Energy Authority (SEA) of the Government of Sri Lanka, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to launch the project on Tuesday, February 24, 2009.

RCEEL is the first in a series of energy efficiency *Centers of Excellence* to be established in countries across South Asia. The Sri Lanka-based center will bring public and private enterprises together to focus on energy efficient lighting that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, be more cost-effective, increase consumer accessibility to energy, and promote energy efficiency throughout the region.

"Access to energy and economic growth are closely linked, so improvements in lighting technology have the potential to improve business opportunities, create sustainable jobs, and increase prosperity," stated Rebecca Cohn, USAID Mission Director. "USAID is committed to helping conflict-affected communities return to normalcy as quickly as possible, and one way to do that is by providing improved access to energy. We are hopeful that the RCEEL will produce innovative technologies that will directly benefit these communities," she continued.

USAID, the development agency of the U.S. Government, has committed up to \$800,000 (Rs.91.16 million) through its South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy (SARI/Energy) program. Funding will be used for limited start-up costs, with a focus on creative initiatives to design, test,

and manufacture high quality lighting products that benefit underserved communities and increase access to new technologies.

In addition, the Lighting Research Center at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in New York, a leading energy research university, will provide technical knowledge, training, and guidance to RCEEL.

“About 4 million people in Sri Lanka do not have electricity, and access to energy will help them move out of poverty,” said Dr. Krishan Deheragoda, Chairman of the Sustainable Energy Authority. “By supporting new lighting technologies, REECL can help produce clean, low-cost, durable, high-quality energy that will benefit underdeveloped communities and control the national demand for energy. We are very proud that Sri Lanka is taking the lead to develop energy efficient lighting in South Asia,” he continued.

SEA will provide cash or in-kind contributions of approximately \$1.8 million (Rs.205.11 million) over three years. The total cost of establishing the RCEEL is estimated to be \$5 million (Rs.569.75 million), with additional support to come from other funders.

The American people, through the U.S. Agency for International Development, have provided development and humanitarian assistance in developing countries worldwide for nearly 50 years. Since 1956, USAID/Sri Lanka has invested nearly \$2 billion to benefit all the people of Sri Lanka.



Caption: USAID Mission Director Rebecca Cohn and Dr. Krishan Deheragoda, Chairman, Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Association, sign a memorandum of understanding to create the first lighting center of its kind in South Asia. The Regional Center for Energy Efficient Lighting is expected to expand access to electricity in underdeveloped areas of Sri Lanka and increase economic growth.

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